

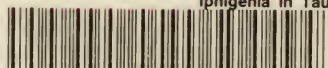
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Iphigenia in Tauris,



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B. Q. MORGAN TRANSLATIONS

IPHIGENIA IN TAURIS

A Drama in Five Acts

by

JOHANN WOLFGANG VON GOETHE

Translated into English Verse

by

BAYARD QUINCY MORGAN

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Persons

Iphigenia, Priestess of Diana

Theas, King of the Taurians

Orestes, Brother of Iphigenia

Iylades, Friend of Orestes

Arkas, Servant of Theas

Scene: Grove outside Diana's Temple

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ACT I

SCENE I

Iphigenia

Out here beneath your shadows, stirring boughs
Of this old, sacred, densely foliaged grove,
As into Dian's silent sanctuary,
E'en now I step with shuddering emotion,
As if I ne'er had entered them before,
Nor does my soul yet feel itself at home.
For years a higher Will, to which I bow,
Has hidden me away, preserved me here;
Yet I am alien as I was at first.
For ah! from those I love the sea divides me,
And long long days I spend upon the shore,
Seeking with all my soul the land of Greece;
To meet my sighs, the hollow-sounding waves
Bring to me only murmurs dull and dead.
Alas for him who, orphaned and alone,
Must lead a lonely life! Each promised joy
Is snatched by sorrow from his very lips,
His thoughts fly ever backward toward the halls
His father held, where first the sunshine oped
All heaven to his eyes, where at their play
Brothers and sisters ever closer joined
The gentle bonds which linked them each to each.
I do not quarrel with the gods; and yet
A woman's lot is truly lamentable.
At home and in the field the man is lord,
Nor is he helpless when away from home.
Possession glads him, victory crowns his deeds,
And he may claim an honorable death.
Ah me, how close confined is woman's fate!
E'en if a husband harsh she must obey,

That's duty and a comfort; wretched she
Whom hostile fortune drives to distant shores.
Thus Thoas holds me here, a noble man,
In solemn, sacred bonds of slavery.
O, with what shame must I confess that I
With veiled repugnance, goddess, serve thee here,
Deliveress! My life should be all thine
In free devotion. Yea, for I have hoped
In thee and do so still, since thou didst fold
This outcast daughter of the greatest king
Within the soft protection of thine arm.
Aye, child of Zeus, if thou that lofty man
Whom thou didst terrify by claiming me,
If thou that godlike leader Agamemnon,
Who sacrificed his dearest at thine altar,
Hast guided safely to his fatherland
In glory, from the toppled walls of Troy,
And hast preserved for him his dearest treasures,
His spouse, his child Electra, and his son;
Then give me too at last back to my own,
And rescue me, once saved from death by thee,
As well from living here, a second death!

SCENE 2

Arkas

King Thoas sends me hither, bids me offer
Diana's priestess greeting and all hail.
This is the day when Tauris thanks its goddess
For wondrous victories that have been won.
I haste before the monarch and his host
To tell thee that he comes and that it nears.

Iphigenia

We are prepared for suitable reception;
Our goddess looks with gracious eye toward
A welcome sacrifice from Thoas' hand.

Arkas

O that I also found the priestess' eye,
Most noble, highly honored, found thine eye,
O holy maiden, clearer and more bright,
A portent good to all! But grief doth still
Mysteriously shroud thine inmost soul;
In vain we wait, these many, many years,
To hear a word of trust come from this breast.
So long as I have known thee at this spot,
This is the glance at which I always quail;
And as with iron bands thy soul remains
Fixed in the inmost chambers of thy bosom.

Iphigenia

As well becomes the exile and the orphan.

Arkas

Deemst thou thyself an exile and an orphan?

Iphigenia

Can a strange shore become our fatherland?

Arkas

Yet strange thy fatherland has now become.

Iphigenia

And hence my bleeding heart can never heal.
In early youth, when scarce my soul was bound
To father, mother, and their offspring dear;
When the new saplings, lovely and united,
Around the parent trunks strove heavenward;
An alien curse, alas, laid hold on me
And snatched me from my loved ones, tore in twain
With ruthless grasp the beauteous bond. 'Twas

gone,

The fairest joy of youth, the prosperous growth
Of early life. Though rescued in the flesh,
I felt myself a shade, and pleasure keen
Of life will never bloom in me again.

Arkas

If so unhappy thou wilt call thyself,
Then I, methinks, may call thee thankless, too.

Iphigenia

Thanks ye have always.

Arkas

Not the purest thanks,
Which to deserve the benefaction's done,
The happy glance, which with a true content
Reveals a heart inclined toward the host.
When destiny mysterious and obscure
Once brought thee to this temple, years ago,
King Thoas met thee as a gift divine
With veneration and affection too,
And kind and friendly was to thee our strand,
Which else to every stranger had been horror,
Since none before thee stepped upon our shores
Who did not fall at Dian's altar steps--
Our ancient use--a bloody sacrifice.

Iphigenia

— Freedom to breathe is not the whole of life.
What life is this, which at the holy shrine,
Like to a shade that haunts its body's tomb,
I can but mourn away? And shall I deem
It full of conscious joy, when every day,
Consumed by futile dreams, can but prepare
The dreamer for those dim and cheerless days
Which at the stream of Lethe, self-forgetting,
Are spent by mourning hosts of the departed?
A useless life is but an early death:
No woman knows this fate as well as I.

Arkas

The noble pride that makes thee underrate
Thyself I can forgive, though pitying thee:
It robs thee of all joyance of thy life.
Since thy arrival thou hast nought achieved?
Who then has cheered the monarch's gloomy soul?
Who was it that our old and cruel custom,
That at Diana's altar every stranger

Must bleed to death, from year to year postponed
With soft persuasion, and the captives sent
From certain death back to their native land?
Has not Diana, far from being wroth
Because deprived of all such sacrifice,
Granted thy gentle prayers abundantly?
Does victory hover not on happy wing
About our host, or e'en precede its march?
And feels not everyone a better lot,
Now that the king, who brave and wisely led us
So many years, is happy to be mild
When thou art nigh, and lightens thus for us
The duty of unqualified obedience?
Thou callst it useless, when from out thy being
A healing balm on countless hearts descends?
When to the folk to whom a god consigned thee
Thou prov'st an endless source of fortune new,
While from th' inhospitable shore of death
For strangers thou prepar'st a safe return?

Iphigenia

The little done eludes the questing eye
Which looks ahead and sees what's left to do.

Arkas'

Shall he be praised who values not his deeds?

Iphigenia

One censures him who weighs what he has done.

Arkas

And him who proudly disregards true worth,
As him who, vain, a spurious worth exalts.
Trust me and heed the counsel of a man
Who gives to thee a true, sincere devotion:
Should on this day King Thoas speak to thee,
Make easier for him what he wills to say.

Iphigenia

Thou frightest me with every kindly word:
His offers I have striven to evade.

Arkas

Consider what thou dost and what is good.
For ever since he lost his only son
There are but few in whom he will confide,
And e'en these few he trusts less than of yore.
With grudging eye he sees each noble's son
Successor to his reign, and so he fears
A lonely helpless ageing, aye perhaps
A bold rebellion and untimely death.
The Scythian sets no store by eloquence,
And least of all the king. He, only wont
To order and to act, knows not the art
Of guiding from afar, by slow degrees,
A discourse subtly to a purposed end.
Let not reserve, refusal thwart his aim,
Nor show deliberate misunderstanding,
But graciously go half the way to meet him.

Iphigenia

And so thou bidst me speed what threatens me?

Arkas

Why, wouldst thou call the royal suit a threat?

Iphigenia

'Tis the most terrible of all to me.

Arkas

Give him for his affection but thy trust.

Iphigenia

If first he will release my soul from fear.

Arkas

Why dost thou hide from him thy origin?

Iphigenia

Because such secrecy becomes a Priestess.

Arkas

The king should not be met with secrecy;
And though he nought demands, be sure he feels it,
And feels it deeply in his noble soul,
That anxiously thou keepst from him aloof.

Iphigenia

Harbors he anger and ill-will toward me?

Arkas

'Twould so appear. True, nought he says of thee;
Yet casual words have taught me that his soul
Has fastened on the wish to make thee his.
O leave him not, I pray, to passion's power!
Lest otherwise displeasure in his soul
Ripen and bring thee horror, and too late
With rue thou mind thee of my counsel true.

Iphigenia

What? Plans King Thoas what no noble man
Who loves his own good name, and whom respect
Of gods his bosom binds, should ever will?
To drag me from the altar by main force
Into his bed? O then I will invoke
The help of all the gods, and most of all
Diana's help, the goddess resolute,
For she will shield her priestess certainly,
And, as a virgin, glad a virgin aid.

Arkas

Be not alarmed! A fresh and heady blood
Drives not the king, such deed of youthfulness
So boldly to commit. No, knowing him,
I fear a different harsh decree from him,
Which irresistibly he'll execute:
His soul is firm and he's immovable.
Therefore I beg, confide in him, be grateful,
If there is nothing else that thou canst grant.

Iphigenia

O tell me, tell me all that's known to thee.

Arkas

Learn it from him. I see the king approach.
Thou honor'st him, and so thy heart must bid thee
To meet him warmly and confidingly.
A noble man can oft be guided far
By woman's kindly words.

Iphigenia (alone)

I fail to see,
In truth, how I can follow his advice;
Yet gladly will I yield me to my duty
And give the king good words for his good deeds;
I only wish that I might say with truth
What would give pleasure to the royal ear.

SCENE 3

Iphigenia

With royal trophies may the goddess bless thee!
May she award thee victory and praise
And riches and the welfare of thy people
And grant thee richly every pious wish!
That thou, who rulest wisely over many,
Mayst more than most enjoy a fortune rare.

Thoas

I were contented if my people praised me.
What I have gained, 'tis others more than I
Have joy of it. The happiest man is he,
And be he king or commoner, for whom
Within his dwelling comfort is prepared.
Thou hadst a share in all my grievous pain,
What time the sword of foemen took my son,
The last and best one, from my side. So long
As vengeance filled my soul, I did not feel
The desolation of my home. But now
When I return contented, since their realm
Has been destroyed, my son's death is avenged,
There's nothing left at home to give me joy.
The glad obedience, which otherwise
I used to see agleam in every eye,
Is dimmed today by sorrow and concern.
For each reflects on what is soon to be
And serves the childless lord because he must.
And now I come today into this temple,

Where oft I came to pray for victory,
Or give thanks for the same. An old desire
I bear within my bosom, which I know
Is nothing strange or unexpected. Thee,
To bless my people and to bless myself,
I hope to lead into my home as bride.

Iphigenia

To one unknown thine offer is too great,
O King. Behold, ashamed the fugitive
Before thee stands, since nought upon this shore
She seeks save rest and safety, which thou gavest.

Thoas

That still the mystery of thy arrival
Veils thee from me as from the least of men
Were nowhere right and good. This country frights
The stranger: law commands it and our need.
But from thyself, received by us as guest,
Enjoying every pious right, I hoped
For confidence, which any kindly host
For hospitality might well expect.

Iphigenia

If I concealed my parents' name and house,
It was embarrassment and not mistrust,
O King. For it might be that if thou knewest
Who stands before thee, what accursed head
Thou'st fed and shielded: horror then would seize
On thy great heart, and unexampled dread,
And stead of bidding me to share thy throne,
Thou'dst drive me prematurely from thy realm,
Wouldst thrust me out, perhaps, before the time
That's destined for my safe and glad return
To my own people and my wanderings' end,
Into the woe that everywhere awaits
The wanderer, when exiled from his home,
With chilling, unfamiliar, dreadful hand.

Thoas

Whate'er it be the gods for thee intend,

Whate'er they purpose for thy house and thee,
I feel no lack, since thou hast dwelt with us
And hast enjoyed the rights of pious guests,
Of blessing which must from on high descend.
I shall not be so easily convinced
That I protect in thee a guilty head.

Iphigenia

Thy good deeds bring thee blessing, not the guest.

Thoas

The good we do the wicked is not blest.
So terminate thy silence and refusal!
No unjust man is he that thus requests.
The goddess tendered thee into my hands:
Holy to her thou wert, and so to me.
And henceforth let her bidding be my law:
If to thy people thou canst find return,
Then I release thee from all claims of mine.
But if for thee the road's forever blocked,
And if thy race is scattered, or mayhap
Extinguished by some vast catastrophe,
Then are thou mine by more than just one law.
Speak frankly! and thou knowst I keep my word.

Iphigenia

Reluctantly from ancient bonds my tongue
Must free itself, discovering at last
A long well-guarded secret. For when once
Confided, it forsakes without return
The safe asylum of the deepest heart
And injures, as the gods decree, or aids.
Hear, then! I'm of the race of Tantalus.

Thoas

Thou speakst a weighty word with outward calm.
Nam'st thou him as thy forebear, whom the world
Acclaims as one who formerly enjoyed
The gods' high favor? What, that Tantalus
Whom Zeus called to his table and his council,

In whose discourses, full of ancient lore
And many-sided wisdom, e'en the gods
Delighted as in sacred oracles?

Iphigenia

'Tis he indeed; but gods should never walk
With men as with their kind: our mortal race
Is far too weak to scape from giddiness
On unaccustomed heights. No traitor he,
And not ignoble; but to be a slave
Too great by far, and yet, to be companion
Of Zeus the Thunderer, a man, no more.
So his offence was human; their decree
Was stern, and poets sing that arrogance
And faithlessness hurled him from Zeus's table
Down to the shame of ancient Tartarus.
Ah, and his race entire has borne their hate!

Thoas

Bore they the guilt of Tantal, or their own?

Iphigenia

Ah well, 'tis true, the Titans' mighty frame
And sturdy strength was certain heritage
Of all his progeny, but fate divine
About their foreheads forged a brazen band.
Good sense and wisdom, patience, moderation,
Were hidden from their furtive, gloomy eyes;
Desire in them turned into furious rage
Which stalked abroad and recognized no bounds.
Thus Pelops of the mighty will it was,
The well-loved son of Tantalus, who won
By murderous treachery the fairest wife,
The child of Oenomaus, Hippodamia.
She bears two sons to meet her husband's wish,
Thyestes, Atreus. Envious they see
Their sire's affection for his first-born son,
Got in another marriage, waxing great.
Their hate unites them; secretly the pair
With fratricide embark upon their crimes.

Their father sees in Hippodamia
The murderess, and fiercely he demands
His son's return from her, but she divests
Herself of life--

Thoas

Thou'rt silent? O, continue!
Repent not of thy confidence! Say on!

Iphigenia

Blest is the man who happily recalls
His fathers, with their prowess and their
greatness

The hearer entertains, and in his heart
Exulting, sees himself forged to their chain
As final link! Not all at once a house
Begets the monster or the demigod:
Only a line of evil men or good
At last brings forth and puts into the world
Horror or joy.--Upon their father's death
The brothers rule the city-state in common.
But not for long could harmony endure.
Thyestes soon befouls his brother's bed.
In vengeance Atreus drives him from the realm.
Thyestes, planning cruel deeds, already
Maliciously had stol'n his brother's son
And reared him secretly with feigned affection.
His soul he fills with rage and thirst for
vengeance

And to the royal city sends him off,
That in his uncle he should slay his father.
The youth's intention having been disclosed,
The king inflicts inhuman punishment,
Thinking he slays his brother's son. Too late
He learns who in the grimmost torture dies
Before his drunken sight; the thirst for
vengeance

To quench within his breast, he quiet schemes
A crime unequalled. Tranquil he appears,

Indifferent and appeased, and lures his brother
With both the latter's sons into his realm;
He seizes on the boys and slaughters them
And sets this loathsome and abhorrent food
Before their father at the first repast;
And when Thyestes, eating his own flesh,
Is sated, and a longing seizes him,
He asks about the boys, their step, their voice
He thinks he hears already at the door--
Then Atreus casts before him with a grin
The heads and feet of those he'd foully slain.--
O King, with shudders thou thy head avertest:
E'en so the sun-god turned his face away
And swerved his chariot from th' eternal course.
These are the ancestors thy priestess owns;
And much unhappy destiny of men,
The doings of disordered minds, is hid
By night beneath her heavy wings, to let
Us only glimpse a twilight terrible.

Thoas

Hide them in silence too. Be this enough
Of horrors! Tell me by what miracle
Thou wert begotten of this savage tribe.

Iphigenia

The oldest son of Atreus was my father,
Named Agamemnon. I can truly say
I have beheld in him since early youth
The model of a man. To him I was
By Clytemnestra borne, first fruit of love,
And thus a peace too long denied was granted
To Tantal's house. But still the parents' joy
Required a son, and scarcely was this wish
Fulfilled, and with his sisters grew the darling
Orestes, when new troubles loomed ahead,
Our settled house to menace.--The repute
Has come to thee of that unhappy war
Which to avenge the fairest woman's rape

Encamped the total might of Greece's princes
About the walls of Troy. Now whether they
Have won the town, the goal of their revenge
Attained, I never learned. My father led
The Grecian host. At Aulis they abode
In vain, awaiting favoring winds. For Dian,
Incensed against their mighty leader, kept
The hasting heroes back and claimed indeed
Through Kalchas' lips the monarch's oldest
daughter.

They lured me with my mother to their camp;
They dragged me to the altar of the goddess
And vowed this life to her.--She was appeased:
She wanted not my blood, and in a cloud
She veiled and rescued me; here in this temple
I first awakened from the dream of death.
For I am she, I am Iphigenia,
Grandchild of Atreus, child of Agamemnon,
Diana's servant, I who speak with thee.

Thoas

I give not more of preference and trust
To thee as princess than as maid unknown.
And so I now repeat the offer made:
Come, follow me and share in what I have.

Iphigenia

How dare I venture such a step, O King?
Has not the goddess who my rescue wrought
Sole claim upon my consecrated life?
She has sought out for me the place of refuge,
And here preserves me for a sire, perhaps,
By false appearance punished hard enough,
As fairest happiness of his old age.
Perhaps my glad return is drawing nigh;
And I, all heedless of her plans for me,
Should bind me to this spot against her will?
I begged a sign of her, if I should stay.

Thoas

The sign is this, that still thou here remainest.
Seek not with zeal for such a subterfuge.
Who would refuse, in vain makes many words:
Of all he says, the other hears but No.

Iphigenia

Mine are not words which are but meant to blind:
I have revealed to thee my inmost soul.
Canst thou not realize how I must yearn,
With anxious thoughts, again to see my father,
My mother and the children she has borne?
That in those ancient halls, where sorrow still
From time to time my name may murmur, joy,
As at the coming of a newborn child,
May twine the fairest wreath round every pillar?
If thou wouldst send me thither in thy ships!
Thou'ldst give new life to me and all of mine.

Thoas

Then get thee hence! Do what thy heart commands,
And overhear the voice of good advice
And common sense. Be woman through and through,
And yield thee to the impulse which, unchecked,
Lays hold on thee to drag thee here or there.
Whene'er a passion in her bosom flames,
No sacred bond will keep her from the traitor
Who lures her from the tried and trusty arms
Of father or of husband; but again,
If in her breast the swift flame has died down,
Persuasion all in vain with golden tongue
In loyalty and force makes its appeal.

Iphigenia

O King, be mindful of thy noble word!
Wilt thus requite the confidence I gave?
I thought thee ready, everything to hear.

Thoas

For th' unexpected I was not prepared;
And yet I should have been, for knew I not

That with a woman I should have to deal?

Iphigenia

Do not upbraid, O King, our weaker sex.

Not glorious like those of men, yet not

Ignoble are the weapons of a woman.

Believe me, herein I have the advantage:

I know thy welfare better far than thou.

Thou deemest, knowing nought of thee and me,

A closer bond would happily unite us.

And full of courage, as of good intent,

Thou urgest me to yield me to thy will;

And here I thank the gods, who gave me strength

To shun this marriage, not by them approved.

Thoas

So speaks no god; 'tis thine own heart that

speaks.

Iphigenia

'Tis only through our hearts they speak to us.

Thoas

And have I not the right to hear them too?

Iphigenia

I think the tempest drowns the gentle voice.

Thoas

Only the priestess hears it, I suppose?

Iphigenia

The prince should heed it more than other men.

Thoas

Thy holy office and thy rights by birth

To Zeus's table bring thee nearer gods

Than any earth-born savage.

Iphigenia

Thus I pay

For confidences thou hast wrung from me.

Thoas

I am a man; and we had better end.

So let my word abide: be priestess, then,

And serve the goddess who has chosen thee;

But may she pardon me, that hitherto,
Unjustly and with inward self-reproach,
Her ancient sacrifices I've withheld.
No stranger lands in safety on our shore:
From earliest times he meets with certain death.
'Twas thou who with a kindness which appeared
Now as a tender daughter's love, and now
As bridal inclination unavowed,
And touched me deeply, as with magic bonds
Enchained me, that my duty I forgot.
My senses thou hadst lulled as in a dream,
I did not hear the murmurs of my people;
More loudly now they call down on my head
The guilt of my poor son's untimely death.
No longer for thy sake will I restrain
The throng which clamors for the sacrifice.

Iphigenia

'Twas not for my sake I requested it.
He misconceives the heavenly ones, who deems
They are bloodthirsty; he ascribes to them
The cruel lusts he feels. Did Dian not
Herself withdraw my body from the priest?
My service was more welcome than my death.

Thoas

For us it is not meet, the sacred rites
On lightly shifting grounds of human reason
To guide and to explain as suits our mind.
Do thou thy duty now, I shall do mine.
Two strangers, whom in caverns of the shore
We found concealed, and surely nothing good
Bode to our country, now are in my hands.
With these men let thy goddess take again
Her first, her rightful offering, long foregone!
I'll send them hither; what to do thou knowst.

SCENE 4

Iphigenia (alone)

Thou hast clouds, O gracious Deliveress,
Safe enveloping innocent victims,
On the breezes to carry and save them
From the arms of pitiless fate,
Over the earth's most mighty expanses,
Wheresoever it seems to thee fitting.
Wise art thou, and thou seest the future;
Yesterday is not past to thy seeming,
And thy glances rest on thy people
As thy light, the life of the night-time,
Rests on the earth, and over it ruleth.
O preserve thou my hands from bloodshed!
Peace or blessing it never can bring us;
And the shape of the casual victim
Lurks for the sad and reluctant slayer,
Fills with terror his evillest hours.
For the Immortals regard with affection
Far-flung races of men that are goodly,
And they lengthen the fleeting existence
Gladly of mortals, granting them gladly
Time to share in the blessed enjoyment
Born of gazing in reverence happy
At their heaven, divine and eternal.

ACT II

SCENE 2

Orestes

It is the road of death on which we tread:
With every step my soul grows quieter.
When I besought Apollo to remove
The Furies' horrid escort from my side,

He seemed, with hopeful, certain, words divine
To promise help and rescue in the temple
Of his loved sister, who o'er Tauris rules;
Now the fulfillment is that all my woe
Shall find its end together with my life.
'Twill not be hard for me, whose mind's benumbed,
Whose heart is shattered by a heavenly hand,
Forever to renounce the sun's fair light.
If Atreus' grandsons on the battlefield
Are not to win a death by vict'ry crowned,
Must I, just like my forebears, like my father,
Ignobly bleed, a hapless, sorry victim:
So be it! Better here before the altar
Than in some corner, where their cursed nets
Assassins close of kin have foully spread.
Grant me till then relief, Infernal ones,
Ye who like hounds unleashed dash for the blood
That dripping from my feet reveals my track!
Leave me, for soon I shall come down to you:
The light of day should see nor you nor me.
The fair green carpet of the earth should be
No playground for vile spectres. There below
I'll visit you: down there a common fate
Will join us in eternal, pallid night.
But thee, my Pyladès, thee, of my guilt
And of my banishment the guiltless partner,
Reluctantly I take, before thy time,
Into that mournful land! Thy life or death
Alone arouses in me hope or fear.

Pylades

As yet I'm not prepared, like thee, Orestes,
Into yon shadowy kingdom to descend.
I'm scheming still, how through the tangled paths,
Which seem to lead into the dark of night,
We'll wind our way back upward into life.
I do not think of death; I scheme and listen,

Whether the gods do not prepare for us
The ways and means to aid our happy flight.
Death, feared or not, comes irresistibly.
But even when the priestess lifts her hand
Our locks to sever and to consecrate,
I'll only think of rescue, thine and mine.
Uplift thy soul from this despondency,
For doubt augments our danger. See, Apollo
Gave us this word: within the sister's fane
Comfort and help await thee, and return.
The words of gods are not ambiguous,
As downcast hearts despondently may deem.

Orestes

The darksome robe of life my mother spread
About me as a babe, so I grew up
The image of my sire; my silent gaze
Was keen reproach to her and to her lover.
How often, when Electra quiet sat
Before the fire-place in the spacious hall,
Timid I'd press myself against her knee
And stare wide-eyed at her, who bitter wept.
Then she would tell much of our lofty sire:
How much I longed to see him, to be near him!
Now I'd fain be at Troy, now wished him home.
Then came the day--

Pylades

O let the fiends of hell
Discourse at night of that unlucky hour!
To us the memory of happy times
Impart new strength for fresh heroic deeds.
The gods have need of many a goodly man
To serve them here upon the spacious earth.
And they have counted on thy aid; they gave
Thee not as escort to thy noble sire,
When he reluctant down to Orcus went.

Orestes

O would that I had grasped his garment's hem
And followed him!

Pylades

Ah, they who saved thy life
Were good to me: for what I had become,
Wert thou not living now, I can not think,
Since I with thee and for thy sake alone
Have lived since childhood and desire to live.

Orestes

Do not bring back to mind those lovely days
When thy abode gave me free residence,
Thy noble father, shrewd and loving too,
The tender shoot, half-frozen, nursed to health;
When thou, a comrade ever blithe and gay,
Just like a lightsome, motley butterfly
Flitted about me with new energy,
Till I, forgetful of my woes, with thee
Was all enthusiastic, dashing youth.

Pylades

Then first my life began, when thee I loved.

Orestes

Say: then my woes began, for that's the truth.
That's the alarming thing about my fate,
That I, like any plague-infected exile,
Bear hidden pain and death within my breast:
That where I enter e'en the healthiest spot,
Too soon about me all the blooming faces
Betray the painful traits of ling'ring death.

Pylades

I surely were the first, such death to die,
If breath of thine could poison. Am I not
As always full of courage and of joy?
And joy and love will ever wing the soul
To deeds of greatness.

Orestes

Deeds of greatness? Oh,

I know the time when we envisaged them!
Often when we together hunted game
And raced o'er hill and dale, and hoped one day,
When breast and fist should match our forebear
great,
With club and sword to hunt down dragons thus,
Or track the robber to his den; at eve
We'd calmly sit beside the mighty ocean,
Propped on each other, and the waves would play
Right at our feet, the world before us then
Lay wide and open; one of us would grasp
His sword, and future deeds as thick as stars
Around us thronged, uncounted, from the night.

Pylades

Unending is the work which to achieve
The soul aspires. And every deed we'd fain
Make just as great as it becomes and grows,
When year on year through lands and generations
The poets' lays have swelled its rolling course.
They sound so fine, the deeds our fathers did,
When, in the quiet evening shade reclining,
Youths drink them in to music of the harp;
And what we do is like their deeds to them,
Vain patchwork fraught with toil!

So we run after that which flees before us,
And overlook the path on which we tread,
And scarcely see beside us footprints faint,
The traces of our forebears' earthly life.
We ever haste their shadow to pursue,
Which godlike in the distance, far away,
On golden clouds the mountain summits crowns.
I value not the man who sees himself
As on a day the people might exalt him;
But thou, O youth, be grateful to the gods,
That through thee they've already done so much.

Orestes

If they endow a man with happy deeds:

That he avert disaster from his race,
That he extend his realm, secure its bounds,
And cause its ancient foe to fall or flee;
Then let him thank them! for to him a god
Has given the foremost, final joy of life.
But me they only chose to be a butcher,
The slayer of the mother I revered,
And, shamefully a deed of shame avenging,
Destroyed me by a nod. There is no doubt,
The doom of Tantal's house they have decreed,
And I, the last one, shall not guiltlessly,
Not honorably die.

Pylades

The gods avenge

The fathers' misdeeds not upon the son;
And each man, be he good or evil, takes
With him the just reward for what he's done.
One can inherit blessings, not a curse.

Orestes

Methinks their blessing does not bring us here.

Pylades

At least it was the gods' exalted will.

Orestes

Why then it is their will whereby we're doomed.

Pylades

Do what the gods command, and wait the event.
If thou canst bring the sister to Apollo,
So that united they at Delphi dwell,
Revered there by a folk of noble mind,
Then for this deed the lofty pair will be
Gracious to thee, will save thee from the clutch
Of those infernal powers. Even now
None dares intrude upon this sacred grove.

Orestes

Then I shall have at least a quiet death.

Pylades

Quite different are my thoughts, and with some

/skt 13

I have combined the future with the past
And quietly expounded it. Perhaps
Long since has ripened in the gods' design
The mighty deed. Diana yearns to go
Away from this harsh land of barbarous men
And from their bloody human sacrifice.
We were appointed for this noble feat;
Upon us 'tis imposed, and it is strange
How we've been forced to find the very gate.

Orestes

With wondrous skill and shrewdly thou combin'st
The gods' high purpose and thy own desires.

Pylades

What is our human shrewdness, should it fail
To hark and heed the will of those above?
To do a dangerous deed a god appoints
A noble man who's gravely sinned, and lays
Upon him what, it seems, can not be done.
The hero triumphs, and atoning serves
Gods and the world, who honor him therefor.

Orestes

If 'tis my destiny to live and act,
A god should take from my o'erweighted brow
This giddiness, which on the slipp'ry path
Spattered with mother's blood now drags me down
To join the dead. Let him, for pity's sake,
Dry up the fountain of a mother's wounds,
Which spouts and sullies me for evermore.

Pylades

Wait with more calm! Thou dost increase the bane,
And tak'st the Furies' office on thyself.
Just let me plan, and hold thy peace! At last,
If action calls for force combined, I'll turn
To thee for aid, then we'll advance as one
With well-considered boldness to the goal.

Orestes

I hear Ulysses speak.

Pylades

Nay, do not scoff.

For each his special hero must select,
Whom he will emulate as up he strives
Toward high Olympus. Let me then confess:
To me nor guile nor shrewdness stain the man
Who consecrates himself to daring deeds.

Orestes

I value him who is both frank and brave.

Pylades

And hence I have not asked thee for advice.
One step's already ta'en, and from our guards
I've ascertained a host of useful facts.
It seems, a foreign woman, half divine,
Has held in check that ancient, bloody law:
Just prayer and incense, and a heart unstained,
She offers to the gods. Men highly praise
Her kindliness; they think she must have sprung
From Amazonian race, that she took flight
In hope to shun some great catastrophe.

Orestes

'Twould seem her shining rule was reft of force
By nearness of the criminal, whose form
That curse, like spreading night, pursues and
shrouds.

A pious blood-thirst frees the ancient rite
From chains she forged, to compass our
destruction.

The monarch's savage mind is slaying us:
A woman will not save us from his wrath.

Pylades

O well for us that 'tis a woman! for
The best of men habituates his soul
To cruelty, and fashions in the end
A law of that which once he must abhor,
Grows hard from habit, sheds his former self.

A woman always keeps the cast of mind
 She's made her own. More surely one can count
 On her in good as well as evil.--Hush!
 She comes; leave us alone. I do not dare
 To name our names at once, our destiny
 Reveal to her without reserve. Go thou,
 And ere she speaks with thee I'll tell thee more.

SCENE 2

Iphigenia

From whence thou art and comest, stranger, tell me!
 Meseems that I might rather to a Greek
 Compare thee than a man of Scythia.

(She removes his chains.)

Iylades

O accents sweet! O welcome, welcome sound!
 The mother tongue here in a foreign land!
 The azure hills of my paternal port
 As captive I behold once more agleam
 Before my eyes. My joy be thy assurance
 That I too am a Greek! For just a moment
 I had forgot how great my need of thee,
 And toward that glorious beauty turned my soul.
 Tell me, if some commandment does not close
 Thy lips, from which of our great families
 Thou hast received thy godlike origin.

Iphigenia

The priestess, whom herself the goddess chose
 And consecrated, stands and speaks with thee.
 Let that suffice thee; tell me who thou art,
 And what unhappy and controlling fate
 Has led thee with thy comrade to these shores.

Iylades

'Tis easy to inform thee what a woe
 Pursues us with a burdensome insistence.
 Couldst thou as easily, priestess divine,

Bestow on us the happy gaze of hope!
Adrastus' sons are we, and come from Crete:
I am the youngest, known as Cephalus,
And he's Laodamas, the oldest son.
Between us twain stood harsh and wild a third,
Who even in the games of early youth
Broke up all harmony and joy. So long
We quietly obeyed our mother's word
As our great father battled before Troy;
But when enriched with booty he returned
And shortly passed away, the brothers soon
Were parted by the strife for realm and wealth.
I sided with the oldest son. He slew
His brother. For this waste of kindred blood
The mighty Furies drive him everywhere.
But to this savage coast Apollo sends us,
E'en he of Delphi, with good hope. He bade
Us in his sister's fane anticipate
The blessed hand of help. Now captives, we
Are hither brought to thee as sacrifice.

Iphigenia

Fell Troy! Give me th' assurance, worthy man.

Pylades

Fallen it lies. Give us assurance, thou,
Of rescue! Speed the help which by a god
Was promised. Take compassion on my brother.
O give him soon a good and gracious word!
But treat him gently, when thou speakst with him,
I beg of thee: for easily his soul
By joy and pain and all his memories
Is gripped and rent. A feverish madness then
Attacks him, and his free and noble spirit
Is given to the Furies as their prey.

Iphigenia

Great as thy trials are, I do conjure thee:
Forget them till my need is satisfied.

Pylades

The lofty town, which ten long years withstood
The Grecian host entire, lies now in ruins
And will not rise again. But many a grave
Of heroes minds us of that barbarous land.
Achilles lies there with his handsome friend.

Iphigenia

Ye too, then, forms divine, are turned to dust!

Pylades

And Palamedes, Telamonian Ajax,
They did not see their native land again.

Iphigenia

Nought says he of my father, names him not
Among the fallen. Yes! he lives for me!
And I shall see him. Ever hope, my heart!

Pylades

But blessed are the hosts of those who died
In bitter sweetness at the foeman's hand!
For grisly terrors and a tragic end
A hostile, wrathful deity prepared
Instead of triumph for the homeward bound.
Do human voices never come to you?
Far as they reach, they bear abroad the tale
Of crimes unheard of, which alas were done.
Then is the grief which fills Mycene's halls
With e'er repeated sighs to thee a secret?--
Queen Clytemnestra with Egisthus' aid
Her spouse upon the day of his return
Ensnared and murdered!--Ah, this royal house
Thou dost revere!--I see, thy breast in vain
Resists this monstrous, unexpected word.
Art thou the daughter of a friend? art thou
As neighbor in that city born? Conceal
It not, and do not blame me overmuch,
That I'm the first to tell thee of these horrors.

Iphigenia

Say on, how was this heinous crime committed?

Pylades

The day of his arrival, as the king
Rose from his bath refreshed and calm, his robe
Requesting from his consort's hand, then cast
The fatal one an ample-folded web,
Which tangled artfully, about his shoulders,
About his noble head; and as he strove
In vain to free himself as from a net,
Egisthus, the betrayer, struck him down,
And veiled went to the dead that mighty prince.

Iphigenia

And what was the reward of the accomplice?

Pylades

A kingdom and a bed already his.

Iphigenia

Then base desire brought on the deed of shame?

Pylades

And the deep feeling of an old revenge.

Iphigenia

How had the monarch then offended her?

Pylades

By a grave wrong, which, if there were excuse
For any murder, this one would excuse.
When as a god opposed the Greeks' departure
With violent winds, he lured the queen to Aulis
And took her oldest child, Iphigenia,
To Dian's altar, where forthwith she fell
A bloody sacrifice, to speed the Greeks.
They say 'twas this that a repugnance planted
So deeply in her heart, that to the wooer
Egisthus she surrendered, and herself
Nets of destruction round her husband cast.

Iphigenia (veiling her face)

It is enough. Thou'lt see me soon again.

Pylades (alone)

The dire affliction of this royal race

Must touch her deeply. Be she who she may,
She has been well acquainted with the king
And was sold hither, to our great good fortune,
From some great house. Be thou discreet, my heart,
And let us shrewdly steer, with courage new,
Toward the star of hope which gleams ahead.

ACT III

SCENE 1

Iphigenia

Unhappy one, I loose thy fetters now
In token of a still more painful fate.
The freedom which this sacred fane affords
Is, like the last bright gleam of dying life,
Prophet of death to those afflicted. Yet
I can not and I dare not tell myself
That you are lost! How could, with murderous
hand,
I vow you two to death? And no one else,
Whoever it might be, may touch your heads,
So long as I am Dian's priestess here.
But if to do that duty I refuse,
As suddenly the irate king demands,
Then some one of my virgins he will choose
As my successor, and I can assist
You then with nothing but my ardent wish.
O worthy countryman! The meanest churl,
Who grazed the hearth of our ancestral gods,
Is highly welcomed in a foreign land:
How shall I you receive with joy and blessing
Enough, who bring to mind heroic forms
Which from my childhood I had learned to honor,
And who refresh and lave my inmost heart
With fresh and lovely hope?

Orestes

Dost thou conceal
Thy name and origin with shrewd intent?
Or may I know who meets me like a goddess?

Iphigenia

Thou shalt yet know me. Pray continue now
The tale whereof thy brother told but half,
The end of those who, coming back from Troy,
Were mutely met upon their very threshold
By destinies as harsh as unexpected.
True, in my youth fate brought me to this strand;
But well I mind me of the timid glance
Which with astonishment and secret awe
I cast upon those heroes. Forth they fared
As if Olympus had thrown ope its gates
And sent the figures of th' illustrious past
Upon the earth to frighten Ilium,
And Agamemnon more than all was splendid!
O tell me! Did he fall, when scarce returned,
Through malice of Egisthus and his wife?

Orestes

Thou sayst it!

Iphigenia

Woe to thee, unblest Mycene!
Then Tantalus's offspring curse on curse
Have sown abroad with full and savage hands,
And like the weed, which shakes its ugly tops
And scatters myriads of seeds about,
To children's children kindred murderers
Begotten in eternal mutual rage!
Reveal what, in the telling of thy brother,
The gloom of terror swiftly hid from me.
How did the last son of the mighty race,
The lovely child, destined one day to be
His father's venger, how did he escape
The day of blood? Or did a similar fate
Around Orestes fling Avernus' nets?

Did he survive? And lives? Electra, too?

Orestes

They are alive.

Iphigenia

O lend me, golden sun,
Thy fairest rays, and lay them as my thanks
At Zeus's throne! for I am poor and mute.

Orestes

Art thou a guest-friend of this royal house,
Or linked to it by even closer bonds,
As thy fair joy would indicate to me,
Control they leaping heart and hold it fast!
For insupportable to joyous souls
Must be a swift relapse back into pain.
As yet thou knowst but Agamemnon's death.

Iphigenia

And have I not enough, in knowing this?

Orestes

'Tis only half the horror thou hast learned.

Iphigenia

What fear? Orestes and Electra live.

Orestes

And fearest thou for Clytemnestra nought?

Iphigenia

She can be saved by neither hope nor fear.

Orestes

Aye, and she parted from the land of hope.

Iphigenia

Did she in raging rue shed her own blood?

Orestes

No, but her own blood brought her to her death.

Iphigenia

Speak plainer, that I need no longer guess.

Uncertainty around my anxious head

Flaps thousandfold its dark, mysterious wings.

Orestes

Then have the gods selected me to be
The herald of a deed, which I were fain
In sultry, soundless caverns of the night
To hide forever? Much against my will
Thy gracious lips compel me; but they may
Demand e'en painful truth, so hear it now.
The day her father fell, Electra hid
And rescued thus her brother: Strophius,
The father's kinsman, willingly received him
And brought him up together with his son,
Who, Pylades by name, around his comrade
Entwined in friendship fairest bonds of love.
And as they grew, there waxed within their soul
The passionate ambition to avenge
The monarch's death. Disguised and unexpected,
They reach Mycene, act as if they brought
The mournful news of young Orestes' death
Together with his ashes. Here the queen
Receives them well; they step into the house.
Orestes to Electra tells his name;
She fans in him the fires of revenge
Which in the sacred presence of his mother
Had sunk within themselves. With stealth she

leads

Him to the very spot where fell his sire,
And where the old faint traces of his blood,
So impiously shed, the oft-washed floor
Discolored with their pale and ominous streaks.
Then every detail of th' atrocious deed
With fiery tongue she painted, telling too
Her life now spent in servile misery,
The gleeful traitors' arrogance, the dangers
Awaiting them from her, no more their mother---
The ancient dagger on him then she forced,
Which e'en in Tantal's house had fiercely raged,
And by her son's hand Clytemnestra fell.

Iphigenia

Immortals, who on clouds forever new
Live blissfully unsullied days, have ye
Secluded me from men so many a year,
Kept me so close to you, assigned to me
The innocent employment, here to nourish
The sacred flame, and like the flame itself
Drawn up my soul in endless, pious light
Into your dwellings--only that I should
In later days and so more deeply feel
The horrors of my house?--O tell me more
Of that unhappy man! Speak of Orestes!--

Orestes

O would that I could tell thee of his death!
Like ferments from the victim's blood arose
The mother's ghost,
And to the ancient daughters of the night
Cries out, "Let not the matricide escape!
Pursue the criminal! He's vowed to you!"
They prick up ears, their hollow glances glare
About them with an eagle's greed. They stir
In murky dens, and from their corners steal
Their comrades, Doubt and Rue, with furtive tread.
Before them rises steam from Acheron:
Within its whirling clouds there rolls and rolls
Eternal recollection of the past
About the guilty head, till he's distraught.
And they, entitled to destroy us, tread
The lovely soil of earth that gods have sown,
From which an ancient curse long banished them.
Their rapid feet pursue the fugitive:
Respite they give, to terrify anew.

Iphigenia

Unhappy one, thou art in similar case
And feelst the woe of that poor fugitive!

Orestes

What say'st thou? How suspect a similar case?

Iphigenia

A fratricide oppresses thee like him;
Thy younger brother this to me confided.

Orestes

I can not suffer that thou, noble soul,
Shouldst by one word of falsehood be deceived.
A lying tissue let a stranger weave
To snare another's feet, himself ingenious
And used to guile; but here between us twain
Be truth!

I am Orestes! and this guilty head
Toward the tomb descends and seeks for death:
It shall be welcome in whatever form!
Whoe'er thou art, for thee and for my friend
I wish deliverance; I desire it not.
Thou seemst to tarry here against thy will;
Devise a plan of flight, and leave me here.
My lifeless corpse may plunge down from the
cliff,
My blood flow steaming down into the sea
And bring a curse on this barbarian shore!
But go, you two, at home in lovely Greece
A new and good existence to begin.

(He withdraws.)

Iphigenia

So then at last, Fulfillment, fairest daughter
Of mighty Zeus, thou comest down to me!
How vast thine image as it stands before me!
My gaze scarce reaches to thy hands, the which,
Filled to the brim with fruit and wreaths of
blessing,
Bring down to me the treasures of Olympus.
As one can know a king by the excess
Of gifts he gives--for that seems small to him
Which would be wealth to thousands--so, ye gods,
One knows you by your presents, long withheld,
But wisely planned. For you alone can know

What's good for us to have, and you can see
The future's great expanse, when every night
The veil of stars and mist our prospect dims.
Calmly ye hear our prayers, which beg for haste
In childish wise; but never plucks your hand,
Ere they are ripe, the golden fruits of heaven,
And woe to him who all impatiently
Would snatch them sour: he eats himself to death.
O let this long awaited happiness,
As yet scarce realized, not, like the shade
Of some departed friend, be glimpsed in vain,
Three times more painfully to pass me by!

Orestes (rejoins her)

Dost thou for Pylades and for thyself
Invoke the gods, name not my name with yours.
Thou wilt not save the criminal, whom thou
Wouldst join, and wilt but share his curse and woe.

Iphigenia

My destiny is firmly bound to thine.

Orestes

By no means! Let, alone and unescorted,
Me go down to the dead. If thou shouldst seek
In thy own veil to hide the guilty one:
Thou'lt not elude their ever watchful gaze,
And e'en thy presence, heavenly as thou art,
Thrusts them aside but will not banish them.
They dare not with their brazen, impious feet
Invade the confines of the sacred grove;
But from the distance now and then I hear
Their horrid laughter. Wolves thus lie in wait
About the tree in which a wanderer climbed
To save his life. Out yonder they abide
Encamped; and if I quit this holy spot,
Then they will rise and shake their snaky locks
And stir up clouds of dust on every side
And drive their helpless victim on and on.

Iphigenia

Canst thou, Orestes, hear a kindly word?

Orestes

No, save it for a favorite of the gods.

Iphigenia

They're giving thee the light of hope renewed.

Orestes

Through smoke and reek I see the pallid gleam
Of Acheron, which lights my way to hell.

Iphigenia

Hast thou Electra only, just one sister?

Orestes

The one I knew; but kindly destiny,
Which seemed to us so frightful, took the oldest
Betimes from the misfortune of our house.
O cease thy questioning, and do not join
The Furies too; they blow maliciously
The ashes from my soul, and suffer not
That of our house's fearful conflagration
The last few coals shall die away in me.
Shall such a fire, with hellish sulfur fed,
Deliberately fanned, burn on for aye,
A torture to my soul?

Iphigenia

I'll throw sweet incense

Into the flame. O let the breath of love
Cool with its pure and gentle breeze the glow
Within thy heart. My dear one, thou, Orestes,
Canst thou hear nought? Have the dread Furies,
thus

Pursuing, dried all blood within thy veins?
Or steals, as from the frightful Gorgon's head,
A spell that turns thy every limb to stone?
O if the voice of spilled maternal blood
With hollow accents calls thee down to hell,
Shall not th' unsullied sister's word of blessing
Call from Olympus gods to render aid?

Orestes

It calls! It calls! Then thou wouldst seal my
doom!

Is there a Fury, then, concealed in thee?
Or who art thou, whose voice so horribly
Stirs up my inmost spirit to the depths?

Iphigenia

Thy inmost heart reveals the truth to thee:
'Tis I, Orestes! I! Iphigenia!
I'm living!

Orestes

Thou!

Iphigenia

My brother!

Orestes Stop! Away!

I charge thee, lay no finger on these locks!
As from Creusa's bridal dress the fire
In me starts other fires unquenchable.
Leave me! Like Hercules will I, unworthy,
Locked in myself, go down to shameful death!

Iphigenia

Thou wilt not perish! O that I might hear
A word of calm from thee! Resolve my doubts,
Let me be sure of joy so long besought.
A wheel of joy and pain rolls on and on
Within my spirit. From the alien man
A shudder parts me; yet my inmost soul
Toward my brother mightily impels me.

Orestes

Is this the shrine of Bacchus? Does a frenzy
Of sacred unrestraint seize on the priestess?

Iphigenia

O hear me! O behold me, how my heart,
So long deprived, surrenders to this bliss:
To kiss the head of him who is the dearest
The earth can hold for me, and with my arms,
Outspread till now but to the empty winds,

To clasp and hold thee! Thrust me not away!
Not from Parnassus wells th' eternal spring
More purely, bubbling down from rock to rock
Into the golden vale, than from my heart
Joy flows and surges, like a sea of bliss
Investing me. Orestes! O my brother!

Orestes

Fair nymph, I trust thee not, thy coaxing's vain.
Diana would have servants chaste and stern
And will avenge her desecrated shrine.
Remove thy arm, I tell thee, from my breast!
And if a youth thou wouldst both save and love,
And sweetly offer him such fortune fair,
Then turn thy gaze and spirit to my friend,
The worthier of us twain. He errs about
On yonder rocky path: go, seek him there,
Show him the way, and spare me.

Iphigenia

Ah, compose

Thy spirit, brother, know that I am found!
Call not a sister's pure and heavenly joy
A reckless and a punishable lust.
Gods, take this madness from his sightless eye,
Lest such a moment of the highest rapture
Should make us trebly wretched! She is here,
The sister lost so long. For Dian snatched
Me from the altar, saved my life, and brought
Me hither to the temple vowed to her.
Thou art a captive, offered as a victim,
And in the priestess findest thine own sister.

Orestes

Unhappy one! Then let the sun behold
The final horrors of our house foredoomed!
Is not Electra here, that she as well
Might go to death with us, nor know reprieve
For still more tragic fate and suffering?
Priestess, 'tis well! I follow to the altar:

For fratricide is of the ancient race
A well established usage; gods, I thank you,
That childless you've resolved to extirpate me.
Let me advise thee, do not love the sun
Too much, and not the stars: come, follow me
Down to the realm of night! As dragons' brood,
Born of the sulfur-pit, devour each other,
Battling the kindred breed, our frenzied race
Destroys itself: come childless down with me,
And guiltless! Lookst at me with pitying eye?
Desist! With similar glances Clytemnestra
A way into her son's heart sought to find;
But with uplifted arm he struck her breast.
His mother fell!--Step forth, thou angry ghost!
Advance, ye Furies, with your circle closed,
And be a witness of the welcome scene,
The last, most horrible you have prepared!
Not hate and vengeance make her dagger sharp:
The loving sister's forced to do the deed.
Nay, shed no tears, for thou art not to blame.
I have loved nothing since my earliest years
As I could love thee, sister.
Aye, brandish high thy steel and spare me not,
This bosom tear apart and open thus
An outlet for the streams that boil in here!

(He drops exhausted.)

Iphigenia

To bear alone this happiness and woe
Exceeds my strength.--Where art thou, Pylades?
Where shall I find thy aid, beloved man?

(She withdraws to search.)

SCENE 2

Orestes

(recovering from his swoon and raising himself up)
Another! Hand me from the floods of Lethe

The cool and final goblet of refreshment!
Soon life's convulsion will be washed away
From out my bosom; soon, with tranquil flow,
My soul, surrendering to oblivion's stream,
Will join you, shades, in your eternal mists.
Be kind and let the harried son of earth
Refresh himself in your tranquillity!--
What whispering do I hear among the branches,
What murmuring sound from yonder twilight dim?--
'Tis they, they come to see the new arrival!
What is the group, which, glorious and compact,
Rejoices like a princely house assembled?
Peaceful they walk, both old and young, and men
With women; like to gods and similar seem
The strolling figures. Yes, 'tis they indeed,
The forebears of my race!--There with Thyestes
Walks Atreus in a converse confidential,
While playfully the boys slip in and out.
Is there no longer enmity among you?
Did vengeance, like the sunlight, fade and die?
Then I am welcome too, and I may dare
To show myself amid your solemn train.
Be welcome, sires! Orestes greets you,
The last male of your ancient race;
What you had sowed, 'twas his to reap;
With curses laden he made his descent.
But lighter grows every burden here:
Take him, O take him into your ranks!--
I honor thee, Atreus, and thee, Thyestes:
For here we are free of all enmity.--
Show me my father, whom one time only
In life I saw!--Is it thou, my father?
Thou ledest my mother as bosom-friend?
If Clytemnestra may clasp thy hand,
Orestes too may step to her side
And boldly tell her: Behold thy son!--
Behold your son! And bid him welcome.

On earth within our house a greeting
Was murder's ever unfailing watchword,
And Tantal's grim and ancient race
Has all its pleasures beyond the night.
You cry out: Welcome! and take me in.
O lead me to him, to our forebear of old!
Where is the ancient? That I may see him,
The precious, highly honored form,
Who with the gods in council sat.
You seem to waver, to turn your faces?
Why is it? Suffers the gods' companion?
Woe's me! The overmighty have forged
With brazen chains to the hero's breast
Unending torments grim and dire.

SCENE 3

Orestes

And have you twain descended too?
Sister, 'tis well! Still Electra's missing:
A kindly god should send us that one
With gentle arrows to join us here.
But thou, poor friend, arousest my pity!
Come one, come all! to Pluto's throne,
As new arrivals our host to greet.

Iphigenia

Immortal pair, who in the heavens wide
Bring forth your lovely orbs by day and night
To light the living, but who may not shine
On the departed, save a mortal pair!
Thou lovest, Artemis, thy gracious brother
Above all else that earth and heaven offers,
And turnest e'er thy virgin countenance
Toward his eternal light in yearning mute.
O let my only brother, found so late,
Not rave thus in the darkness of his madness!
And is thy will, which brought and hid me here,

Completed now, and if through him thou wilt
Give me assistance blest, and him through me,
Then free him from the fetters of that curse,
Lest from us fade the precious chance of rescue.

Iylades

Dost recognize us and this sacred grove,
This light as well, that shines not on the dead?
Dost feel the arms of sister and of friend,
Which still embrace thee firmly, still alive?
Seize us with strength: we are not empty shades.
Hark to my words! And grasp them! And collect
Thy forces! Every moment's precious now,
And our return depends on slender threads,
Which seemingly are spun by favoring fate.

Orestes (to Iphigenia)

O let me now at last with heart set free
Know unmingled joy within thy loving arms!
Ye gods above, who with your flaming force
Majestic stride, consuming threat'ning clouds,
And, graciously severe, long prayed-for rains
With crash of thunder and with roaring gusts
In streams unbridled pour upon the earth,
But soon the people's shuddering expectation
Resolve in blessing, and their timid awe
Transform to joyful looks and thanks made loud,
When in the drops on leaves refreshed anew
The sun, restored, is mirrored a thousandfold
And Iris, friendly, gay, with lightest touch
The curtain gray of the last clouds divides:
O let me also in my sister's arms,
Upon my comrade's breast, enjoy and keep
With thanks unstinted what ye grant to me!
The curse is yielding, so my heart affirms,
The Furies all retreat, I hear them go,
To Tartarus: with distant thunder crash
They slam the brazen gates behind their backs.
The earth exhales an odor quickening

And summons me, upon its verdant plains
To hunt the joy of life and valiant deeds.

Pylades

Waste not the time so closely measured out!
The wind which swells our sails should be the
first

To bring our full joy up to high Olympus.
Come! For we need swift counsel and resolve.

ACT IV

SCENE 1

Iphigenia

If the immortal ones
Plan for a mortal man
Many perplexities,
And make ready for him
Deeply violent shifts of mood,
Plunging from joy to pain,
Leaping from pain to joy:
Then they raise up for him
Near the town where he dwells,
Or on a seacoast remote--
That in time of distress
Aid should likewise be present--
An imperturbable friend.
Your blessing, gods, upon our Pylades,
And whatsoever he may undertake!
He is the sturdy arm of youth in battle,
The shining eye of age in the assembly:
For lo, his soul is quiet; it conserves
The sacred, unexhausted gift of calm,
And to the storm-tossed from its deeps he gives
Counsel and help. He snatched me from my brother;
I stared at him amazed, and o'er and o'er,
And my great fortune could not realize,

Would not release him from my arms, nor felt
The nearness of the peril which surrounds us.
They're going now, to carry out their plan,
Toward the sea, where in a bay concealed
Their ship and comrades wait upon their sign,
And guileful words they put upon my lips
And taught me what to answer to the king,
When he should send, the sacrifice to order
More urgently. Alas, I clearly see
I must submit to guidance like a child.
I have not learned to keep my plans concealed,
Nor, using guile, to gain my purpose. Woe,
Woe to the lie! It does not liberate,
Like every other word of spoken truth,
The breast; it does not comfort; it affrights
The one who words it secretly, and swerves,
As 'twere a speeding arrow which by gods
Diverted fails to hit its mark, around
And strikes the archer. Now with care on care
My bosom reels. The Furies may perhaps
Again attack my brother on the soil
Of the unhallowed shore. Could they not be
Discovered there? It seems to me I hear
Armed men approaching!--Here!--The messenger
Is coming from the king with rapid pace.
My heart is throbbing, clouded grows my soul
As I look on the features of the man
Whom with a falsehood I must now confront.

SCENE 2

Arkas

O priestess, hasten with the sacrifice!
The king expects it, and the people wait.

Iphigenia

I should obey my duty and thy hint,
But that an unexpected hindrance thrust

Itself between me and the rite complete.

Arkas

What is't that should prevent the king's command?

Iphigenia

An accident, which we can not control.

Arkas

Then tell it me, that I may swift report it:
For he's decided that these two shall die.

Iphigenia

The gods have not decided that as yet.
The older of these strangers bears the guilt
Of shedding blood which was close kin to him.
The Furies therefore follow on his track,
And even in the inner shrine itself
The frenzy seized him, and his presence there
Polluted thus the temple pure. So now
I hasten with my maidens, by the sea
Laving with wavelets fresh the goddess' image,
To celebrate the mystic consecration.
Let none disturb our quiet, solemn train!

Arkas

I will report this new impediment
Unto the king at once; do thou begin
The holy ritual not, till he permits.

Iphigenia

The priestess claims this as prerogative.

Arkas

So rare a case the king should know as well.

Iphigenia

His counsel as his order alters nought.

Arkas

The mighty one is often asked pro forma.

Iphigenia

Do not insist where I must needs refuse.

Arkas

Do not refuse what's useful and is good.

Iphigenia

I will give in, if thou wilt not delay.

Arkas

Quickly I'll bear my news back to the camp,
And quickly with his words I'll here return.
O could I bring to him another word
To solve all problems that beset us here:
Thou didst not heed this loyal friend's advice.

Iphigenia

Gladly I did what I had power to do.

Arkas

There still is time for thee to change thy mind.

Iphigenia

Once and for all, that's not within our power.

Arkas

Thou deemst impossible what costs thee effort.

Iphigenia

By wishing it thou deemst it possible.

Arkas

Wilt thou then everything so calmly risk?

Iphigenia

I've placed it in the keeping of the gods.

Arkas

They're wont to rescue men by human means.

Iphigenia

We only have their signs by which to go.

Arkas

I say to thee, within thy hand it lies.
It is alone the king's infuriate mood
That makes these strangers suffer bitter death.
The troops long since from cruel sacrifice
And from this sanguine service weaned their souls.
And more than one, whom hostile destiny
Bore to a foreign shore, felt it himself,
How godlike to the wretched wight astray,
Upon a foreign border tossed about,
Is any human face of friendly mien.
O turn not from us what thou canst achieve!

Iphigenia
Do not disturb my spirit, which thou canst
Not bend aside according to thy will.

Do not disturb my spirit, which thou canst
Not bend aside according to thy will.

So long as there is time, one spares no effort
Nor repetition of a kindly word.

Thou spendest effort, causest me but pain;
Both fruitless, therefore leave me now in peace.

It is the pain on which I call for aid:
For 'tis a friend, who counsels but thy good.

It seizes on my soul with brutal force,
But my repugnance it will not destroy.

And can a finer soul repugnance feel
For benefactions of a noble man?

Yes, if the noble man, as is not meet,
Instead of thanks insists on taking me.

Who feels no inclination, never lacks
A word of exculpation as defense.
I'll tell the king what here has taken place.
O wouldst thou tell thy spirit o'er and o'er
How noble his behavior toward thyself
From thy arrival onward to this day!

SCENE 3

Iphigenia (alone)

At time inopportune this man's appeals
Are such as make me feel my very heart
Now all at once reversed. I'm terrified!--
For as the waxing tide with rapid streams
Spills over all the rocks which on the shore
Lie on the sand: just so a stream of joy
Wholly submerged my inmost soul. I held
Within my arms th' impossible. Once more
A cloud seemed softly to invest my form,
To lift me from the earth, and in that sleep
To lull my senses, which the good Diana
Around my temples laid, what time her arm
Embraced and rescued me.--My sister-heart
My brother grasped with force unparalleled:
I hearkened only to his friend's advice;
Only to save them did my soul press on.
And as the skipper gladly turns his back
Upon the cliffs of a deserted isle,
So Tauris lay behind me. Now the voice
Of this true man has roused me once again,
Reminding me that human beings too
I here forsake. And doubly my deceit
Grows hateful now. O keep thee calm, my soul!
Dost thou begin to waver and to doubt?
See, of thy solitude the solid soil
Thou must abandon! Once again embarked,
The waves will seize and rock thee, and in fear
And murk thou wilt misjudge the world and thee.

SCENE 4

Pylades

Where is she? that with winged words I bring
To her the happy message of our rescue!

Iphigenia

Thou seest me full of care, in expectation
Of certain comfort which thou promisest.

Pylades

Thy brother is restored to health! We trod
Unconsecrated rocks and shore and sand
In cheerful converse; soon the grove remained
Behind us, but to that we paid no heed.
And in a great and ever growing splendor
The glorious flame of youth rose up around
His curly head; his eyes, dilated, glowed
With hope and courage, and his heart unchained
Surrendered wholly to the joy, the bliss,
Of saving thee, deliveress, and me.

Iphigenia

All blessings come to thee, and from thy lips,
Which speak such welcome tidings, may no sound
Of suffering lamentation never come!

Pylades

I bring thee more than that; for like a prince,
With escort fair, good fortune's wont to go.
Our valiant comrades we have likewise found.
Within a rocky bay they had concealed
Our ship and sat expectant but in woe.
They saw thy brother, burst out into shouts,
And urgent begged to speed the parting hour.
Now every hand is longing for the oar,
And e'en a murmuring seaward breeze arose,
Observed by all at once, on favoring wings.
So let us hasten, lead me to the shrine!
Let me the holy temple enter, let
Me reverent seize the goal of our desires!
Alone I have the strength, the goddess' image
On practised shoulders to transport away:
Ah, how I yearn to feel that welcome weight!
(At these words he approaches the temple without
observing that Iphigenia is not following; at

last he turns around.)

Thou standest hesitant--what is--thou'rt mute!
Thou seemst perplexed! Does some calamity
Oppose anew our happiness? O speak!
Hast thou sent messengers to tell the king
The shrewd excuse on which we had agreed?

Iphigenia

I have indeed, dear friend; but thou wilt chide.
Thy very aspect is a mute reproach.
The monarch's envoy came, and as thou hadst
Dictated them, I spoke thy very words.
He seemed astonished, and this ritual rare
Insisted on reporting to the king,
To learn his will before I should proceed;
And now I am awaiting his return.

Iylades

Alas for us! Renewed the danger hovers
About our foreheads! Wherefore didst thou not
Astutely cloak thee in thy priestly right?

Iphigenia

I ne'er have viewed or used it as a cloak.

Iylades

Ah then, thou spirit pure, thou wilt destroy
Thyself and us as well. Why did I not
Anticipate this case, and coach thy lips
This summons likewise to elude?

Iphigenia

Ah, chide

But me, the guilt is mine, as well I feel;
But I could act no other toward the man
Who gravely and with reason asked of me
What my own heart must as his right concede.

Iylades

Our perils grow again; but even so
Let us not feel despair, or, ill-advised,
In overhaste betray ourselves. With calm
Do thou await the messenger's return,

And then stand fast, whatever he may say:
For to determine such a ritual
Is priestly right and not that of the king.
If he demands to see the alien man
So gravely burdened by insanity,
Refuse it on the pretext that thou keepst
Us guarded in the shrine. Thus gain us time,
That we, with utmost speed, of such a treasure
Deprive this crude, unworthy folk, and flee.
Apollo sends to us the best of omens,
And ere his prime condition we fulfill,
Already he fulfills, godlike, his promise.
Orestes now is free, is cured!--O lead
Us over with the freed one, favoring winds,
E'en to the rocky isle where dwells the god;
Then to Mycene, that it may revive,
That from the ashes of th' extinguished hearth
With joy the gods ancestral rise again
And shining fire illuminate their dwellings!
Thy hand shall be the first to scatter incense
To them from golden bowls. Thou'lt bring again
Good health and life across the threshold there,
Wilt expiate the curse and deck anew
Thy people richly with fresh flowers of life.

Iphigenia

Whene'er I hear thee speak, dear man, my soul,
Just as the flower keeps turning toward the sun,
Encountering the radiance of thy words,
Turns to their welcome comfort. How delightful
The firm assurance of a present friend,
Whose heavenly force the solitary lacks
And quiet droops. For slowly ripens, locked
Within his bosom, thought and bold resolve;
A loved one's presence would mature them soon.

Pylades

Farewell! I'll quickly go and calm our friends,
Who wait with yearning expectation. Then

As quickly I'll return and listen here,
Hid in this rocky copse, for sign from thee--
What dost thou muse? A train of quiet woe
O'erspreads now all at once thy brow serene.

Iphigenia

Forgive me! Like light clouds across the sun,
Across my spirit floats a light concern
And some timidity.

Pylades

Nay, have no fear!

Deceptively with danger fear concluded
A close confederation: they are partners.

Iphigenia

I call that fear a noble one, which warns
Against a foul deception, or a theft
From him who has become my second father.

Pylades

The butcher of thy brother thou wouldst flee.

Iphigenia

It is the man who has been good to me.

Pylades

There's no ingratitude where need compels.

Iphigenia

Ingratitude it is; need but excuses.

Pylades

In thy case, surely, before gods and men.

Iphigenia

But yet my own heart is not satisfied.

Pylades

Demands too strict are nought but hidden pride.

Iphigenia

I do not analyze, I only feel.

Pylades

Feeling aright, thou must revere thyself.

Iphigenia

Only the heart unstained enjoys itself.

Pylades

Then thou hast kept thee well in yonder temple;
For life instructs us, we should be less strict
With others and ourselves: thou'lt learn it too.
So wondrously this human race is formed,
So manifold its bonds and twining links,
That no man in himself, nor with his fellows,
Can keep himself all pure and unperplexed.
Nor are we called upon to judge ourselves;
To go his way and look well to his path
Is every man's immediate, foremost duty:
For seldom weighs he rightly what he's done,
And almost never what he's doing now.

Iphigenia

Almost thou dost persuade me to thy view.

Pylades

What need of suasion, when there is no choice?
To save thyself, thy brother, and a friend,
There's but one way; what can we do but take it?

Iphigenia

O let me hesitate! for thou thyself
Wouldest lightly do to no man such a wrong
To whom for benefits thou wert indebted.

Pylades

If we go down to death, there waits for thee
Reproach more bitter, burdened with despair.
One sees thou art not wont to suffer loss,
Since thou, this vast misfortune to escape,
Declin'st to sacrifice one word untrue.

Iphigenia

O would I bore a manly heart in me,
Which, when it cherishes a bold resolve,
Closes its ears to every other voice!

Pylades

In vain dost thou refuse; the ruthless hand
Of dire necessity commands; her solemn nod
Is law supreme, to which the gods themselves

Must give obedience. In silence rules
Eternal fate's inexorable sister.
What she imposes thou must bear, must do
What she commands. The rest thou knowest. Soon
I will return, from thy most holy hand
The precious seal of rescue to receive.

SCENE 5

Iphigenia (alone)

I must obey his words: for my beloved
I see in pressing danger. Yet, alas!
I grow more anxious as to my own fate.
O shall I not preserve the secret hope
So fairly cherished in my solitude?
And shall this curse retain its sway forever?
Shall this race never with a blessing new
Arise again?--All other things decrease!
The greatest joy, the fairest force of life
Grows faint at last: why not the curse as well?
Then did I hope in vain, here safe immured,
And from my house's destiny detached,
One day with heart and hand unstained and pure
To cleanse of guilt the gravely sullied dwelling.
For scarcely is a brother in my arms
From savage frenzy wondrously and swift
Restored, scarce nears a vessel long invoked,
To take me back to the ancestral port,
When blind necessity with rigid hand
Upon me lays a double crime: to steal
The sacred image trusted to my care
And much revered, and to deceive the man
To whom I owe my life and favored fate.
O let not a revolt well up at last
Here in my bosom! Let the Titans' wrath,
The ancient gods' deep hatred against you,
Olympians, not seize this tender breast

With claws of vultures! Rescue me, I pray,
And rescue thus your image in my soul!
Into my ears rings out the ancient lay--
I had forgotten it, and willingly--
The Parcae's song, which shuddering they sang,
When Tantalus fell from the golden chair!
They suffered with their noble friend: incensed
Their bosom was, and fearful was their song.
In youthful years our nurse sang it to me
And to the others, and I marked it well.

To mortals becometh
The fear of the gods!
They hold their dominion
In hands everlasting,
And they can employ it
As pleases them best.

Let him doubly fear them
Whom they have exalted!
On clouds and on summits
The seats are made ready
Round tables all golden.

If discord arises:
The guests tumble downward,
Disgraced and dishonored,
To lightless abysses,
And vainly await there,
In fetters and darkness,
A justified judgment.

But they remain sitting
In feasting eternal
At tables all golden.
They rise and go striding
From mountain to mountain;

The breath of the Titans,
Half stifled, steams upward
From pits far below them,
A reek sacrificial,
A cloudlet of incense.

The rulers, averting
Their favoring glances
From races entire,
Disdain in the scion
The once-beloved features,
Though mutely expressive,
They knew in the sire.

So chanted the Parcae;
The banished one hearkens
In caverns nocturnal:
He lists to their singing,
Thinks children, grandchildren,
And shaketh his head.

ACT V

SCENE 1

Arkas

I am perplexed, I own, and do not know
Where to direct the eyes of my suspicion.
Is it the prisoners, who furtive plan
To flee? Or is it she who's aiding them?
The rumor grows: the ship that brought the pair
Is still in hiding somewhere in a bay.
And that one man's insanity, this rite,
The holy pretext of this long delay,
Increase suspicion, more precaution urge.

Thoon

Command the priestess quickly to appear!

Then go and search the shores with sharp despatch
From yonder headland to the sacred grove.
Spare ye the holy precincts, but employ
Deliberate ambush and attack the foe;
Where'er you find them, seize them as you're wont.

SCENE 2

Thoas (alone)

Fiercely the wrath within me shifts its aim:
First against her, whom I so holy deemed,
Then against me, who nurtured her betrayal
By kindness and indulgence. For mankind
To slavery habituates itself
Quite easily, and with but little trouble
Learns to obey, if of all freedom reft.
Aye, had she got into the savage grasp
Of my progenitors, and had been spared
By their grim rites, she would have been content
To save herself, and would have realized
With thanks her fate, shedding all alien blood
Before the altar, calling duty then
What was necessity. My kindness now
Brings up bold wishes from her bosom's deeps.
In vain I hoped to join her life to mine:
She's planning now a future of her own.
'Twas flattery whereby she won my heart:
Since that I now resist, she seeks to find
A way by fraud and guile, and all my kindness
She deems an ancient and prescriptive right.

SCENE 3

Iphigenia

Thou summonest me! What brings thee here to us?

Thoas

Thou hast postponed the sacrifice; and why?

Iphigenia

To Arkas I have made a clear report.

Thoas

From thee I fain would hear still more detail.

Iphigenia

The goddess gives thee time to reconsider.

Thoas

Thou seemst to find that time quite opportune.

Iphigenia

Now if thy heart is adamantly fixed
Upon this harsh decree, thou shouldst not come!
A monarch who demands inhuman acts
Finds men enough who for rewards and favor
Are quick to halve the curse upon the crime;
But outwardly the king remains unstained.
He hatches death within a darkling cloud,
And his appointed bring down flaming death
Upon the victim's head; but calmly he
Floats onward through his heights, for all the
storm,

A deity unreach'd, unreachable.

Thoas

'The priestess' lip intones a savage lay.

Iphigenia

Not priestess now! but Agamemnon's daughter.
Thou didst revere the word of one unknown,
Wilt rashly thou command the princess? No!
I learned from early childhood to obey,
My parents first and then a deity,
And, thus obeying, always in my soul
Felt fairest freedom; but the harsh command,
The rude decision of a man to heed
I learned not there, nor have I learned it here.

Thoas

An ancient law, not I, bids thee obey.

Iphigenia

With eagerness we seize upon a law

Which serves our passion as its instrument.
Another speaks to me: an older law,
Which bids me to oppose thee, the command
That makes each stranger holy in our eyes.

Thoas

It seems these captives must be very dear
To thee: for in thy sympathetic throes
Thou dost forget the first behest of prudence,
Not to exasperate the man of might.

Iphigenia

Spoken or not, thou'lt never fail to know
What lies here in my heart and here abides.
Does recollection of a similar fate
Not ope to sympathy a heart reserved?
How much more mine! In them I see myself,
For I myself have quaked before the altar,
And awfully an early death enclosed
The kneeling maid: the knife already rose
To pierce this bosom full of pulsing life;
My inmost soul in giddy horror reeled,
My eyesight failed, and--sudden I was saved.
Are we not bound, what gracious gods to us
Have granted, to bestow on the afflicted?
Thou knowest that, and me, and wilt compel me?

Thoas

Obey thy sacred office, not thy lord.

Iphigenia

Desist! And do not palliate the power
Which in a woman's weakness takes delight.
In birth I am as free as any man.
If Agamemnon's son stood facing thee,
And thou shouldst make demands that are not meet,
Then he too has a weapon and an arm,
The birthright of his bosom to defend.
I have but words, no more, and it beseems
The noble man to heed a woman's word.

Thoas

I heed it more than any brother's sword.

Iphigenia

The lot of battle ever shifts its ground;
No prudent fighter underrates the foe.
Nor in the face of harshness and assault
Has nature left the weak without defense.
She gave him joy in guile, she taught him skills:
Now he retreats, hangs back, and circumvents.
The man of violence deserves such wiles.

Thoas

Precaution shrewdly counters every trick.

Iphigenia

And one with soul unsullied needs it not.

Thoas

Be cautious, speak not judgment on thyself.

Iphigenia

O if thou knewest how my spirit battles,
An evil fate, which fain would seize upon it,
In its first onslaught boldly to repel!
Then do I have against thee no defense?
My fair request, the lovely olive-branch,
By far more potent in a woman's hand
Than sword and weapon, thou dost thrust aside:
What's left to me, my soul to justify?
Shall I request of Dian miracles?
Is there no force within my spirit's deeps?

Thoas

It seems the fate of these two strangers makes
thee

Immoderately concerned. Who are they, speak,
That cause thy soul so stoutly to rebel?

Iphigenia

They are--they seem--I take them to be Greeks.

Thoas

Ah, fellow-countrymen! No doubt they have
Renewed in thee the fair dream of return?

Iphigenia (after a silence)

Can man alone to unexampled deeds
 Lay rightful claim? And to his hero-breast
 Clasp tightly, he alone, th' impossible?
 What call we great? What lifts the quivering soul
 Of the narrator at each repetition,
 Save that which with improbable success
 The daringest began? Who in the night
 Alone into the hostile army steals,
 And raging like a fire all unforeseen
 Attacks the sleepers and the waking foes,
 And then at last, pressed back by those aroused,
 Returns with booty, riding foemen's steeds,
 Is he alone belauded? He alone,
 Who, scorning roads secure, sets forth to rove
 Through woods and mountains boldly, till he

cleanse

A land of robbers? Is nought left for us?
 Must a frail woman yield her inborn right,
 Be wild toward the wild, like Amazons
 Deprive you of your sword-right, and with blood
 Avenge our long suppression? Up and down
 Here in my breast there seethes a bold emprise:
 I shall not fail to harvest grave reproach
 Nor great disaster, if my project fail;
 But now, ye gods, I lay it on your knees!
 If you are truthful, as your praises claim,
 Then show it by your aid, and glorify
 The truth though me!--Yes, hear the truth, O

King,

A secret treachery is being planned:
 To see the captives thou wilt ask in vain,
 For they are gone and seek to join their friends,
 Who with the ship await them on the shore.
 The older, whom the frenzy seized upon
 And has forsaken now--it is Orestes,
 My brother, and the other his close friend,

Thomas

Iphigenia

Thoas

Iphigenia

No, King, O no! Yes, I could be deceived;

But these are true and faithful. Shouldst thou
find

Them otherwise, then let them fall, and me
For folly's punishment cast out and banish
Upon some rocky islet's dreary shore.
But if this man is he whom long I lacked,
My brother well beloved, release us, be
To both of us, as to the sister, kind.
My father fell by reason of his wife,
And so her son slew her. The final hope
Of Atreus' race depends on him alone.
Let me with heart and hand unstained and pure
Go back and for these grievous crimes atone.
Thou'lt keep thy word!--If ever to my folk
Return for me should be assured, thou sworst
That thou wouldst let me go; and now it is.
A king does not, like common men, assent
Embarrassed, only that the suppliant
He briefly may remove, nor promise make
Expecting that the case will not occur:
Then first he feels the summit of his worth,
When he the waiting suppliant can bless.

Thoas

Reluctantly, as fire gainst water strives
And hissing seeks to extirpate its foe,
The wrath here in my bosom seeks defense
Against thy words.

Iphigenia

O let thy mercy flame
Like to the quiet light of hallowed lamp,
Wreathed round with songs of praise and thanks
and joy.

Thoas

How oft this voice my tumult quieted!

Iphigenia

Extend to me thy hand as peaceful sign.

Thoas

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Thou askest much in this short space of time.

Iphigenia

To do good works one need not stop to think.

Thoas

Quite wrong! for e'en the good may lead to evil.

Iphigenia

It is but doubt which turns the good to evil.

Reflect no more; but grant as thou dost feel.

SCENE 4

Orestes (armed, facing the wings)

Double your forces! Hold the foe in check!

Just a few moments! Yield not to their throng,

But cover for my sister and for me

The passage to our ship!

(To Iphigenia, without seeing the king.)

Come, we're betrayed.

Scant space is left to us for flight. Be quick!

(He perceives the king.)

Thoas (reaching for his sword)

No man may wield with safety in my presence

A naked sword.

Iphigenia

The dwelling of the goddess

Do not by rage and murder desecrate.

Give orders to cease fighting, heed the voice

Of priestess and of sister!

Orestes

Sister, speak!

Who is't that threatens us?

Iphigenia

Revere in him

The King, who made himself my second father!

Forgive me, brother, but my childlike heart

Has laid without reserve our fate entire

In Thoas' hand. I have confessed your plan

And thus have freed my soul from treachery.

Orestes

And will he grant to us return in peace?

Iphigenia

Thy gleaming sword prevents me from reply.

Orestes (sheathing his sword)

Then speak! Thou seest, I obey thy words.

SCENE 5

Pylades and, soon after, Arkas enter, both with
swords unsheathed.

Pylades

Do not delay! Our men are mustering

Their last remaining strength; retreating, they

Are being slowly pressed back toward the sea.

Ah, what discourse of princes do I find!

This is the honored presence of the king!

Arkas

Calmly, O King, as seemly 'tis for thee,

Dost thou confront thine enemies. Forthwith

Their rashness will be punished: in retreat

Their men are falling, and their ship is ours.

A word from thee, and 'twill be flaming.

Thoas

Go!

Give orders to cease fighting! Let no man

Injure the foe, so long as here we speak.

(Exit Arkas.)

Orestes

Accepted! Go, assemble, faithful friend,

Our troop's remainder; quiet then await

What end the gods prepare for our emprise.

(Exit Pylades.)

SCENE 6

Iphigenia

Relieve me of concern, ere you begon
Your discourse. For I fear an angry strife,
If thou, O King, wilt not consent to hear
The gentle voice of reason, thou, my brother,
Thy too impetuous youth wilt not command.

Thoas

I will restrain my wrath, as well befits
The older. Give reply! What evidence
Hast thou to show thou'rt Agamemnon's son
And brother of this woman?

Orestes

See the sword

With which he slew the doughty men of Troy.
I took it from his murderer, and begged
The heavenly ones, that on me they bestow
The mighty king's good fortune, strength, and
courage,
And grant to me a fairer death than his.
Choose one among the nobles of thy host
And place me opposite the best thou hast.
Far as the earth sustains heroic sons,
To strangers this request is ne'er denied.

Thoas

This privilege our old tradition here
Has ne'er allowed to strangers.

Orestes

Then begin

A new tradition here with thee and me!
A people's emulation sanctions oft
Their rulers' noble deed and makes it law.
For our sole freedom let me not contend,
Let me as stranger for all strangers fight!
Their doom with mine be uttered if I fall;
But if good fortune grant me victory,

Henceforth let no man tread this shore, but that
He meet the rapid glance of helpful love,
And comforted let each one take his leave.

Thoas

Not all unworthy, youth, thou seemst to me
Of those great forebears whom thou claimst as
thine.

Great is the count of noble, valiant men
Within my train; but even at my age
I face the foe myself, and I am ready
With thee to risk the fortunes of the fray.

Iphigenia

By no means! Such a bloody proof, O King,
Is not required! Thy hand take from the sword!
Think of me and my fate. The conflict swift
Immortalizes man, and though he fall,
The song will praise him. But the endless tears
Of those surviving, of the wife forsaken,
No after-ages count, and poets say
No word of thousand days and nights of weeping,
Wherein a soul in secret would recall
In vain the lost, too soon departed friend,
And eats its heart away. A deep concern
Warned me at once that 'twas no robber's fraud
Which snatched me from a refuge safe, betraying
My life to serfdom. So I questioned them
With zeal, inquired for every circumstance,
Demanded tokens; now my heart is sure.
Behold the birthmark on his dexter hand
As of three stars, which on the very day
When he was born revealed itself, and which
The priest construed as meaning direful deeds
This fist should do. Then doubly I'm convinced,
Seeing the scar which cleaves his eyebrow here.
Electra, quick and heedless as she was,
Let him as child fall headlong from her arms.
He fell upon a tripod--it is he--

Or shall I the resemblance to his father;
The inner jubilation of my heart,
Call up as evidence of my assurance?

Thoas

And if thy words should banish every doubt,
And should I chain the anger in my breast,
Yet weapons must decide between us still;
I see no peace. Thou dost thyself admit
That they have come to steal away from me
The goddess' sacred image. Think you, then,
To that I will consent? Oft turns the Greek
His greedy eye on far barbarian treasure,
The golden fleece, or horses, daughters fair;
But violence and guile not always led
Them safely home with booty in their grasp.

Orestes

O King, the image shall no discord breed!
For now we know the error, which a god
About our foreheads draped as 'twere a veil,
When hitherward he bade us make our way.
For counsel I besought him, and as well
For freedom from the Furies' dread pursuit;
He said, "If thou wilt bring to Greece the sister,
Who bides on Tauris' shore against her will
In holy fane, the curse will lose its force."
We misconstrued this as Apollo's sister,
But it was thou he meant! The bonds severe
Are loosened now; and to thine own again
Thou, holy one, art given. Touched by thee
I found my cure; and in thine arms the frenzy
One final time with all its cruel claws
Seized on me horribly, and in my bones
Curdled the very marrow; then it fled
Like serpent to its hole. Now I enjoy
Anew through thee the spacious light of day.
And fair and glorious looms up in my sight
The goddess' plan. For like a holy image

To which the changeless fortune of a town
Is fettered by a mystic word divine,
She took away thee, guardian of our house;
And kept thee safely in a holy calm
As blessing to thy brother and thy race.
And when all rescue on the earth so wide
Seemed lost, thou givest all to us again.
Allow thy soul to turn toward peace, O King!
Prevent her not from bringing to the full
The consecration of her native house,
Restoring me to halls now cleansed of guilt,
And placing on my head the ancient crown!
Thus force and guile, the greatest boast of men,
Are by the truth of this exalted soul
All put to shame, and pure and childlike trust
Placed in a noble man finds its reward.

Iphigenia

Think of thy promise, let thyself be moved
By words like these from frank and faithful lips.
Behold us twain! For such a noble act
Thou wilt not oft have opportunity.
Refuse thou canst not; let assent be swift.

Thoas

Then go!

Iphigenia

Not so, my King! Devoid of blessing,
Detested so, I will not part from thee.
Do not exile us! Let the right prevail
Of hospitality twixt thee and us:
Then not eternally are we disjoined
And separated. Worthy thou and dear,
E'en as my father was, art thou to me,
And this impression lingers in my soul.
If e'er the lowest of thy people brings
Back to my ear the cadence of the voice
To which I've grown accustomed in this land,
I will receive him like a very god,

I will myself prepare a couch for him,
Invite him to a seat beside the fire
And ask him but of thee and of thy fate.
I pray the gods may give thee for thy deeds
And for thy kindness well-deserved reward!
Farewell! O turn thy face to us and give
A kindly word at parting back to me!
Then will the breeze more gently fill our sails,
And tears more soothing pour forth from the eyes
Of him who leaves. Farewell! Extend to me
Thy hand as lasting friendship's pledge.

Thoas

Then fare

You well!

The End.

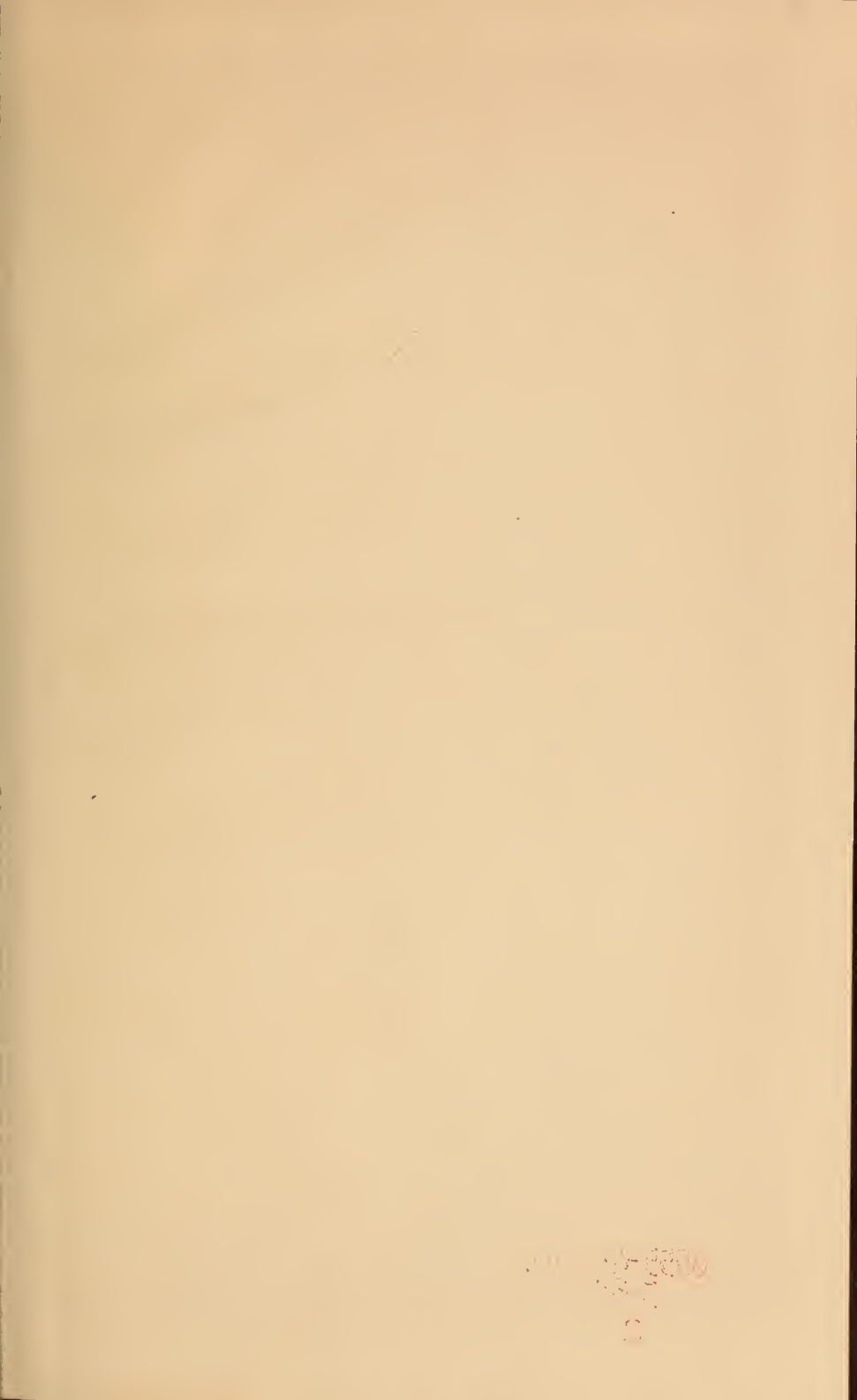




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